

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Aviation Administration

14 CFR Part 39

[Docket No. FAA-2020-0978; Project Identifier MCAI-2020-00459-R; Amendment 39-21318; AD 2020-23-02]

RIN 2120-AA64

Airworthiness Directives; Airbus Helicopters

AGENCY: Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), DOT.

ACTION: Final rule; request for comments.

SUMMARY: The FAA is adopting a new airworthiness directive (AD) for all Airbus Helicopters Model EC225LP helicopters. This AD was prompted by a report of a manufacturing and control issue regarding the ceramic balls in the bearing installed in the swashplate assembly of the main rotor mast assembly. This AD requires repetitive inspections of the bearing in the swashplate assembly of the main rotor mast assembly for discrepancies (ceramic balls that have a hard point or sensitive axial play or both) and, depending on the findings, replacement of an affected main rotor mast assembly with a serviceable main rotor mast assembly, as specified in a European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) AD, which is incorporated by reference. The FAA is issuing this AD to address the unsafe condition on these products.

DATES: This AD becomes effective December 4, 2020.

The Director of the Federal Register approved the incorporation by reference of a certain publication listed in this AD as of December 4, 2020.

The FAA must receive comments on this AD by January 4, 2021.

ADDRESSES: You may send comments, using the procedures found in 14 CFR 11.43 and 11.45, by any of the following methods:

- Federal eRulemaking Portal: Go to <https://www.regulations.gov>. Follow the instructions for submitting comments.
- Fax: 202-493-2251.
- Mail: U.S. Department of Transportation, Docket Operations, M-30, West Building Ground Floor, Room W12-140, 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE, Washington, DC 20590.

- Hand Delivery: U.S. Department of Transportation, Docket Operations, M-30, West Building Ground Floor, Room W12-140, 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE, Washington, DC 20590, between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays.

For material incorporated by reference (IBR) in this AD, contact the EASA, Konrad-Adenauer-Ufer 3, 50668 Cologne, Germany; telephone +49 221 8999 1000; email ADs@easa.europa.eu; internet www.easa.europa.eu. You may find this IBR material on the EASA website at <https://ad.easa.europa.eu>. You may view this IBR material at the FAA, Office of the Regional Counsel, Southwest Region, 10101 Hillwood Pkwy., Room 6N-321, Fort Worth, TX 76177. For information on the availability of this material at the FAA, call 817-222-5110. It is also available in the AD docket on the internet at <https://www.regulations.gov> by searching for and locating Docket No. FAA-2020-0978.

Examining the AD Docket

You may examine the AD docket on the internet at <https://www.regulations.gov> by searching for and locating Docket No. FAA-2020-0978; or in person at Docket Operations between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays. The AD docket contains this AD, any comments received, and other information. The street address for Docket Operations is listed above. Comments will be available in the AD docket shortly after receipt.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Kathleen Arrigotti, Aviation Safety Engineer, Large Aircraft Section, International Validation Branch, FAA, 2200 South 216th St., Des Moines, WA 98198; phone and fax: 206-231-3218; email: kathleen.arrigotti@faa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Discussion

The EASA, which is the Technical Agent for the Member States of the European Union, has issued EASA AD 2020-0079, dated April 1, 2020 (EASA AD 2020-0079) (also referred to as the Mandatory Continuing Airworthiness Information, or “the MCAI”), to correct an unsafe condition for all Airbus Helicopters Model EC225LP helicopters. This AD was prompted by a report of a manufacturing and control issue regarding the ceramic balls of the bearing installed in the swashplate assembly of the main rotor mast assembly.

The FAA is issuing this AD to address defective ceramic balls in the bearing installed in the swashplate assembly of the main rotor mast assembly, which could lead to premature spalling of the ball itself and of the bearing, loss of function of the bearing, and overload of the main rotor mast scissor, resulting in reduced control of the helicopter. See the MCAI for additional background information.

Related Service Information Under 1 CFR Part 51

EASA AD 2020-0079 describes procedures for repetitive inspections of the main rotor mast swashplate assembly for discrepancies (ceramic balls that have a hard point or sensitive axial play or both), and replacement of an affected main rotor mast assembly with a serviceable main rotor mast assembly. This material is reasonably available because the interested parties have access to it through their normal course of business or by the means identified in the ADDRESSES section.

FAA's Determination

This product has been approved by the aviation authority of another country, and is approved for operation in the United States. Pursuant to the FAA's bilateral agreement with the State of Design

Authority, the FAA has been notified of the unsafe condition described in the MCAI referenced above. The FAA is issuing this AD because the FAA evaluated all pertinent information and determined the unsafe condition exists and is likely to exist or develop on other products of the same type design.

Requirements of This AD

This AD requires accomplishing the actions specified in EASA AD 2020-0079 described previously, as incorporated by reference, except for any differences identified as exceptions in the regulatory text of this AD and except as discussed under “Difference Between this AD and the MCAI.”

Explanation of Required Compliance Information

In the FAA's ongoing efforts to improve the efficiency of the AD process, the FAA initially worked with Airbus and EASA to develop a process to use certain EASA ADs as the primary source of information for compliance with requirements for corresponding FAA ADs. The FAA has since coordinated with other manufacturers and civil aviation authorities (CAAs) to use this process. As a result, EASA AD 2020-0079 is incorporated by reference in this final rule. This AD, therefore, requires compliance with EASA AD 2020-0079 in its entirety, through that incorporation, except for any differences identified as exceptions in the regulatory text of this AD. Using common terms that are the same as the heading of a particular section in the EASA AD does not mean that operators need comply only with that section. For example, where the AD requirement refers to “all required actions and compliance times,” compliance with this AD requirement is not limited to the section titled “Required Action(s) and Compliance Time(s)” in the EASA AD. Service information specified in EASA AD 2020-0079 that is required for compliance with EASA AD 2020-0079 is available on the internet at <https://www.regulations.gov> by searching for and locating Docket No. FAA-2020-0978.

Difference Between This AD and the MCAI

Although the service information referenced in EASA AD 2020-0079 specifies to return affected parts to the manufacturer, this AD does not include that requirement.

Interim Action

The FAA considers this AD interim action. If final action is later identified, the FAA might consider further rulemaking then.

FAA's Justification and Determination of the Effective Date

Section 553(b)(3)(B) of the Administrative Procedure Act (5 U.S.C.) authorizes agencies to dispense with notice and comment procedures for rules when the agency, for “good cause” finds that those procedures are “impracticable, unnecessary, or contrary to the public interest.” Under this section, an agency, upon finding good cause, may issue a final rule without seeking comment prior to the rulemaking.

An unsafe condition exists that requires the immediate adoption of this AD without providing an opportunity for public comments prior to adoption. The FAA has found that the risk to the flying public justifies waiving notice and comment prior to adoption of this rule because defective ceramic balls in the bearing installed in the swashplate assembly of the main rotor mast assembly could lead to premature spalling of the ball itself and of the bearing, loss of function of the bearing, and overload of the main rotor mast scissor, resulting in reduced control of the helicopter. In addition, the

compliance time for the required action is shorter than the time necessary for the public to comment and for publication of the final rule. Therefore, the FAA finds good cause that notice and opportunity for prior public comment are impracticable. In addition, for the reasons stated above, the FAA finds that good cause exists pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553(d) for making this amendment effective in less than 30 days.

Comments Invited

This AD is a final rule that involves requirements affecting flight safety and was not preceded by notice and an opportunity for public comment. However, the FAA invites you to send any written comments, data, or views about this AD. The most helpful comments reference a specific portion of the proposal, explain the reason for any recommended change, and include supporting data. To ensure the docket does not contain duplicate comments, commenters should submit only one copy of the comments. Send your comments to an address listed under the ADDRESSES section. Include “Docket No. FAA-2020-0978; Project Identifier MCAI-2020-00459-R” at the beginning of your comments.

Except for Confidential Business Information (CBI) as described in the following paragraph, and other information as described in 14 CFR 11.35, the FAA will post all comments received, without change, as well as a report summarizing each substantive public contact with FAA personnel concerning this AD. The FAA will consider all comments received by the closing date for comments. The FAA may amend this AD because of those comments.

Confidential Business Information

CBI is commercial or financial information that is both customarily and actually treated as private by its owner. Under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) (5 U.S.C. 552), CBI is exempt from public disclosure. If your comments responsive to this AD contain commercial or financial information that is customarily treated as private, that you actually treat as private, and that is relevant or responsive to this AD, it is important that you clearly designate the submitted comments as CBI. Please mark each page of your submission containing CBI as “PROPIN.” The FAA will treat such marked submissions as confidential under the FOIA, and they will not be placed in the public docket of this AD. Submissions containing CBI should be sent to Kathleen Arrigotti, Aviation Safety Engineer, Large Aircraft Section, International Validation Branch, FAA, 2200 South 216th St., Des Moines, WA 98198; phone and fax: 206-231-3218; email: kathleen.arrigotti@faa.gov. Any commentary that the FAA receives that is not specifically designated as CBI will be placed in the public docket for this rulemaking.

Regulatory Flexibility Act (RFA)

The requirements of the RFA do not apply when an agency finds good cause pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553 to adopt a rule without prior notice and comment. Because the FAA has determined that it has good cause to adopt this rule without notice and comment, RFA analysis is not required.

Costs of Compliance

The FAA estimates that this AD affects 30 helicopters of U.S. registry. The FAA estimates the following costs to comply with this AD:

Estimated Costs for Required Actions

Labor cost	Parts cost	Cost per product	Cost on U.S. operators
4 work-hours × \$85 per hour = \$340, per inspection	\$0	\$340	\$10,200, per inspection

The FAA estimates the following costs to do any necessary on-condition action that would be required based on the results of any required action. The FAA has no way of determining the number of helicopters that might need this on-condition action:

Estimated Costs of On-Condition Action *

Labor cost	Parts cost	Cost per product
4 work-hours × \$85 per hour = \$340	(*)	* \$340

* The FAA has not received any definitive data regarding the parts cost, therefore this table does not include estimated costs for parts.

Authority for This Rulemaking

Title 49 of the United States Code specifies the FAA's authority to issue rules on aviation safety. Subtitle I, section 106, describes the authority of the FAA Administrator. Subtitle VII: Aviation Programs, describes in more detail the scope of the Agency's authority.

The FAA is issuing this rulemaking under the authority described in Subtitle VII, Part A, Subpart III, Section 44701: General requirements. Under that section, Congress charges the FAA with promoting safe flight of civil aircraft in air commerce by prescribing regulations for practices, methods, and procedures the Administrator finds necessary for safety in air commerce. This regulation is within the scope of that authority because it addresses an unsafe condition that is likely to exist or develop on products identified in this rulemaking action.

Regulatory Findings

The FAA determined that this AD will not have federalism implications under Executive Order 13132. This AD will not have a substantial direct effect on the States, on the relationship between the national government and the States, or on the distribution of power and responsibilities among the various levels of government.

For the reasons discussed above, I certify that this AD:

- (1) Is not a “significant regulatory action” under Executive Order 12866, and
- (2) Will not affect intrastate aviation in Alaska.

List of Subjects in 14 CFR Part 39

Air transportation, Aircraft, Aviation safety, Incorporation by reference, Safety.

Adoption of the Amendment

Accordingly, under the authority delegated to me by the Administrator, the FAA amends 14 CFR part 39 as follows:

PART 39—AIRWORTHINESS DIRECTIVES

1. The authority citation for part 39 continues to read as follows:

Authority: 49 U.S.C. 106(g), 40113, 44701.

§ 39.13 [Amended]

2. The FAA amends § 39.13 by adding the following new airworthiness directive:



AIRWORTHINESS DIRECTIVE

www.faa.gov/aircraft/safety/alerts/
www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/advanced.html

2020-23-02 Airbus Helicopters: Amendment 39-21318; Docket No. FAA-2020-0978; Project Identifier MCAI-2020-00459-R.

(a) Effective Date

This airworthiness directive (AD) becomes effective December 4, 2020.

(b) Affected ADs

None.

(c) Applicability

This AD applies to Airbus Helicopters Model EC225LP helicopters, certificated in any category, all manufacturer serial numbers.

(d) Subject

Joint Aircraft System Component (JASC) Code 6230, Main Rotor Mast/Swashplate.

(e) Reason

This AD was prompted by a report of a manufacturing and control issue regarding the ceramic balls in the bearing installed in the swashplate assembly of the main rotor mast assembly. The FAA is issuing this AD to address defective ceramic balls in the bearing installed in the swashplate assembly of the main rotor mast assembly, which could lead to premature spalling of the ball itself and of the bearing, loss of function of the bearing, and overload of the main rotor mast scissor, resulting in reduced control of the helicopter.

(f) Compliance

Comply with this AD within the compliance times specified, unless already done.

(g) Requirements

Except as specified in paragraph (h) of this AD: Comply with all required actions and compliance times specified in, and in accordance with, European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) AD 2020-0079, dated April 1, 2020 (EASA AD 2020-0079).

(h) Exceptions to EASA AD 2020-0079

(1) Where EASA AD 2020-0079 refers to its effective date, this AD requires using the effective date of this AD.

(2) The "Remarks" section of EASA AD 2020-0079 does not apply to this AD.

(3) Although the service information referenced in EASA AD 2020-0079 specifies to return affected parts to the manufacturer, this AD does not include that requirement.

(4) Where the service information referenced in EASA AD 2020-0079 specifies “compliance with the works steps concerned with the check is described in a video” this AD requires a complete rotation of the swashplate in both directions using a rate of one revolution per minute.

Note 1 to paragraph (h)(4): Refer to the video specified in the service information referenced in EASA AD 2020-0079 for guidance.

(5) Where EASA AD 2020-0079 refers to flight hours, this AD requires using hours time-in-service. The guidance provided by Note 1 to Table 1 in EASA AD 2020-0079 is still applicable.

(i) No Reporting Requirement

Although the service information referenced in EASA AD 2020-0079 specifies to submit certain information to the manufacturer, this AD does not include that requirement.

(j) Alternative Methods of Compliance (AMOCs)

The Manager, International Validation Branch, FAA, has the authority to approve AMOCs for this AD, if requested using the procedures found in 14 CFR 39.19. In accordance with 14 CFR 39.19, send your request to your principal inspector or local Flight Standards District Office, as appropriate. If sending information directly to the International Validation Branch, send it to the attention of the person identified in paragraph (k) of this AD. Information may be emailed to: 9-AVS-AIR-730-AMOC@faa.gov. Before using any approved AMOC, notify your appropriate principal inspector, or lacking a principal inspector, the manager of the local flight standards district office/certificate holding district office.

(k) Related Information

For more information about this AD, Kathleen Arrigotti, Aviation Safety Engineer, Large Aircraft Section, International Validation Branch, FAA, 2200 South 216th St., Des Moines, WA 98198; phone and fax: 206-231-3218; email: kathleen.arrigotti@faa.gov.

(l) Material Incorporated by Reference

(1) The Director of the Federal Register approved the incorporation by reference (IBR) of the service information listed in this paragraph under 5 U.S.C. 552(a) and 1 CFR part 51.

(2) You must use this service information as applicable to do the actions required by this AD, unless this AD specifies otherwise.

(i) European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) AD 2020-0079, dated April 1, 2020.

(ii) [Reserved]

(3) For EASA AD 2020-0079, contact the EASA, Konrad-Adenauer-Ufer 3, 50668 Cologne, Germany; telephone +49 221 8999 000; email ADs@easa.europa.eu; internet www.easa.europa.eu. You may find this EASA AD on the EASA website at <https://ad.easa.europa.eu>.

(4) You may view this IBR material at the FAA, Office of the Regional Counsel, Southwest Region, 10101 Hillwood Pkwy., Room 6N-321, Fort Worth, TX 76177.

(5) You may view this material that is incorporated by reference at the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). For information on the availability of this material at NARA, email fedreg.legal@nara.gov, or go to: <https://www.archives.gov/federal-register/cfr/ibr-locations.html>.

Issued on October 27, 2020.

Gaetano A. Sciortino,

Deputy Director for Strategic Initiatives, Compliance & Airworthiness Division, Aircraft
Certification Service.

[FR Doc. 2020-25466 Filed 11-18-20; 8:45 am]